

VZCZCXRO4777  
RR RUEHPOD  
DE RUEHVJ #0791 1830816  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 020816Z JUL 09  
FM AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0423  
RUEHPS/AMEMBASSY PRISTINA 0191  
RUEHPOD/AMEMBASSY PODGORICA 0073  
RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB 0621  
RUEHTI/AMEMBASSY TIRANA 0172  
RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 0084  
RUEHSF/AMEMBASSY SOFIA 0067  
RUEHLJ/AMEMBASSY LJUBLJANA 0119  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0193  
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA 0337  
RUEHSQ/AMEMBASSY SKOPJE 0305  
RUEHPNH/NVC PORTSMOUTH 0033

UNCLAS SARAJEVO 000791

DEPT FOR CA/EX,CA/FPP, CA/VO, AND EUR/SCE (MIKE FOOKS); SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFRD](#) [CVIS](#) [CMGT](#) [CPAS](#) [ASEC](#) [BK](#)

SUBJECT: Sarajevo non-immigrant visa application numbers in dramatic decline.

REF: Sarajevo 00592, 00000492, 00493, 00053, 01714, 01715

¶1. (Summary) Not since 9/11 has Post experienced a decrease in non-immigrant visa numbers as dramatic as that which has occurred during this global economic crisis. But, Post has seized this unanticipated drop in applications as an opportunity to expand its anti-fraud and student outreach programs.

¶2. Post has been monitoring a steady fall in NIV applications over the course of the past year. To date Post's numbers show a drop of 24 percent compared to last year. Even more marked is this June's numbers, which reveal a drop of 35 percent compared to June of last year.

¶3. Interestingly, our refusal rate has also fallen, perhaps indicating that only applicants with exigent reasons are traveling this year. Given the economic crisis, the Bosnian diaspora, which numbers approximately 250,000 in the US, will likely be less able to send airline tickets to family members located in Bosnia. As the Summer season heads in to full swing, we wonder if the diaspora American citizens that normally flood the streets of Sarajevo in July and August will have the funds to visit their country of origin. With airline tickets this Summer hovering around \$1,500 from Sarajevo to the Bosnian enclave in St. Louis, Missouri, most families would probably find travel prohibitively costly.

¶4. Post has seized the opportunity to expand fraud and student outreach field programs during this downturn in visa applications. Our fraud team has completed field excursions to Bihac/Velika Kladusa, Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Tuzla, Prijedor/Sanski Most(see REF) as well as numerous local visits within the Sarajevo region. Likewise, we have expanded our student outreach program in cooperation with OPA to American corners in Tuzla, Bihac, Zenica and Doboj. Consular staff are also gearing up for extensive validation studies of B1/B2, C1/D, and P3 visas. The fraud team is currently planning visits to other regions within Bosnia-Herzegovina including Mostar, the eastern portion of the Republika Srpska and Eastern Sarajevo.

English